



# Report to Schools Forum

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> June 2023

**Title:** Report of the DSG Expenditure Review Group

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## Recommendations:

- a) To note the final outturn position for the High Needs Block in 2022-23
- b) To note the update on the SEND Sufficiency Strategy
- c) To note the information on the DBV Programme, including the full introductory pack, and the expected requirements of the DBV Diagnostic phase.

## Purpose of Paper

1.1. This paper updates Schools Forum on the most recent meeting of the DSG Expenditure Review Group. The main items discussed were:

- 1) The high needs block outturn for 2022-23
- 2) Update on the SEND Sufficiency Strategy
- 3) Update on the Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme

## 2. High Needs Block Outturn 2022-23

2.1. Appendix 1 to this report shows a summary of the financial outturn for the high needs block in 2022-23. High Needs Block has a favourable variance of £0.9m at the end of the year.

2.2. This is a movement of £2.4m from the previous forecast. The main changes are:

- **Post-16 spend** – movement of £2.3m
  - Decisions re Continuing Health Care contributions not always clear or timely and therefore health income not fully forecast
  - Data quality – including data on placements in FE Colleges

- **Integrated Therapies** – movement of £0.9m. Additional investment agreed by the Council not utilised by the Provider as additional staffing not recruited.
- **Top Ups and Place Funding** in schools – increased spend of £0.6m compared with forecast
- **Top ups for Early Years** pupils – reduced spend of £0.1m
- **Alternative Provision** – increased spend of £0.2m compared with forecast

### 3. Update on SEND Sufficiency Strategy

3.1. The group received an update on the review of the SEND Sufficiency Strategy, key points included:

- 1) The Special School property board has now been expanded into the SEND Sufficiency Impact Group and will now report into the SEND Improvement Board.
- 2) The membership of the group has been broadened to include primary, secondary and special school representation. The group has ensured that the membership links with health and social care through the DSCO, DCO and virtual head.
- 3) Previously the group had focused on projects for school aged pupils, but the expanded board will look at sufficiency for all children and young people with EHC plans, with post 16 an important focus. Alongside continuing to monitor the delivery of a range of different projects to deliver both additional ARP, Units and Special School places.

### 4. Delivering Better Value in SEND

4.1. On 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022 the DfE launched the new Delivering Better Value in SEND (DBV) programme, which will be delivered in partnership with Newton Europe Limited and Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

4.2. The programme is supporting 55 local authorities (LAs) with substantial or growing deficits to manage their high needs systems, so they provide effective and sustainable SEND services that achieve good outcomes for their children and young people. A Sector Steering Group will jointly oversee this programme ensuring learning is shared more widely with the sector, building further on the research and guidance publications.

4.3. The programme builds on research published by the DfE on [effective management of high needs systems in local authorities](#) which makes 10 recommendations relating to capacity, partnership culture and developing local provision.

4.4. Buckinghamshire is in Tranche 3 of the DBV Programme and will be engaging with CIPFA and Newton Europe Limited in the summer of this year. Initial learning from Tranche 1 local authorities has now been shared. The priorities in the current

Buckinghamshire DSG Recovery Plan are felt to be in line with the key learning shared to date.

## Objectives of the Programme

- 4.5. Delivering Better Value (DBV) is a programme working to identify and implement local and national opportunities to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Information on the DBV in SEND Programme can be found on the programme's website [Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme \(dbvinsend.com\)](http://dbvinsend.com).
- 4.6. At the end of the first phase the council will be able use the outputs from the diagnostic phase to support a grant application for up to £1m to support the implementation of the high needs management plan.
- 4.7. The Introductory pack provided by Newton Europe Limited and CIPFA is attached as Appendix 2 to this paper. The introductory pack includes information on
  - 1) The aims of the DBV in SEND Programme
  - 2) The purpose and stages of the Diagnostic Phase
  - 3) Expected engagement through the Diagnostic Phase
  - 4) Examples of the output from this phase

## Buckinghamshire Engagement to Date

- 4.8. The timeline included in Appendix 2 indicates that the Diagnostic Phase will last for approximately 6 months from initial data collection to the finalisation of a grant application to support the high needs plan.
- 4.9. To date we have had an initial meeting to discuss the data request and are now working on the data returns. Data, including costs, is required at child level from 2017 to 2022 and is a significant task to complete.
- 4.10. A set up meeting will be arranged with the DBV team for a date in June and engagement in the programme will then commence in August with the Module 1 training.

## Engagement of Wider Stakeholders

- 4.11. As the DBV in SEND Programme is a whole system approach it will be necessary to engage with a wide stakeholder group throughout the diagnostic phase. The key stakeholders and objectives for engagement are identified as follows:

## ● Engagement Objectives



The engagement objectives for all groups identified in this pack are:

To make sure that the diagnostic and implementation plans are informed by a wide range of stakeholders who have all had a chance to contribute to and shape the outputs – so using the insight and expertise of these individuals to help make the right decisions.

To enable a representative set of people from all stakeholder groups feel they have had a chance to contribute. To enable them to feel that their contributions have been heard and incorporated into findings and plans wherever possible.

To enable partners and stakeholders to actively participate, throughout the diagnostic and into implementation.

The identified groups are:

Children and young people

PCFs and wider parent carers

Schools

Health and social care partners

The suggestions in the following slides are based on approaches used by other DBV local authorities so far, but you will be the best judge of what else could be done to maximise the chance of achieving the above engagement objectives.

Satisfaction of these engagement objectives will be a critical enabler to successful grant approval.

4.12. Suggested ways in which schools can be engaged through the process include:

## ● Schools



Ensure that a broad range of education colleagues are engaged (including headteachers, Setting Leads, SENCOs, teachers and governors) from the start of the diagnostic so that they understand what the diagnostic is and what it aims to achieve.

Below are several ways we could engage schools' colleagues through and DBV diagnostic:



Invite colleagues from schools and settings to attend practitioner case review workshops to feed in their views on cases.



Agree which schools' forums we should attend to update them on the programme and have a two-way dialogue about current issues and opportunities for improvement.



Share with schools forum (or relevant forums) that we will be launching a survey during module 2 to understand the views of headteachers and SENCOs on the current system, inclusive practice and what support they need to understand how to best share this survey to increase their response rate

- If surveys have already been carried out locally we will work to build on existing data and to incorporate that data into DBV diagnostic findings.
- We have a standard survey that has been shared across each of the LAs but tailored to add specific and relevant questions for that LA.
- We also have the relevant communications materials to be shared alongside this survey.



Involve schools' colleagues in the grant application stage by holding working sessions to jointly develop ideas and plans.



Involve schools' colleagues in the implementation phase by inviting them to join relevant working groups or governance forums, as appropriate.

4.13. It is suggested that this group is the main group for engagement with schools and updating Schools Forum throughout the process. Regular updates will be brought to this group and there is likely to be a need for group members to be involved in workshops etc

## Next Steps

4.14. Completion of the data return for the diagnostic.

4.15. Set up meeting to take place in June.

#### 4.16. Attendance at Module 1 training in August (Officers from SEND, Finance and Business Intelligence)

